

UPDATE

January 2014

Forestry Update

As reported in our previous issue, there may not be a prescribed burn in spring 2014. Rather, Forestry plans to focus on more removal of woody invasives (trees and shrubs) over the winter and other site maintenance work.

Grenadier Pond Interpretive Signs Project – Phase 2

All signs and suggested photos and images have been submitted to the City for layout and production. Final layouts are expected soon, then the request for tender will go out for sign production. For more information about this project see the project [webpage](#).

Ongoing Efforts to Protect Wildlife at Grenadier Pond

We are working with City staff to develop signage to identify wildlife protection areas where fishing and other activities are not allowed, and to promote best practices and compliance with the City's fishing by-law. Park Operations is currently reviewing the proposed signs with other stakeholders. The goal is to have new signs in place in time for the spring fishing season, and also to coordinate installation with the interpretive signs.

Also, we are following up with the City regarding plans for the 2014 Family Fishing Day. We recommend that another site be used for this event which will be less sensitive, not already subject to excessive fishing impacts, and accessible to families from priority neighbourhoods.

Environmentally Significant Areas (ESA) Designation

City Planning has reviewed the ESA designations as part of the five-year review of the Official Plan. The area known as the High Park Extension (#38A) was designated part of the provincially significant life ANSI in 2008. It is the only ANSI in Toronto not yet designated ESA. The City Planning study found this extension satisfied the City's ESA criteria. This area consists of high-quality savannah vegetation, and is on or adjacent to the tablelands. ESA designation provides for some protection of the natural heritage, within the context of the City's Official Plan, as development is not permitted within them, and activities are limited to those which are compatible with the preservation of the natural feature(s).

The City's ESA study excluded the Upper and Lower Duck Ponds on the grounds they are man-made. The Lower Duck Pond now meets the criteria for an ESA (it's not ANSI). We are contacting the City to recommend that this area be included in the High Park ESA.

Social Media

Scott Morrison is now actively managing the Twitter account for High Park Nature and will also take on the High Park Stewards account. We are building up a number of followers and many of our tweets have been retweeted to spread the word to others. Check our website for these Twitter links (smartphone not required).

Overall website activity is up compared to the last quarter of 2013 and 2012, although the last quarter tends to be quiet.

Maps

The Attractions map at highpark.org has been updated to show various restoration sites, and the [Park Map](#) at our website has been similarly updated. We are recommending that Park Operations include these natural features on any update of the City's version of the park map.

We are also recommending that the Labyrinth not be included on park maps in accordance with the agreement undertaken by the City and Labyrinth supporters when the site was first established, to keep its location inside a natural restoration area low-key and not attract excessive traffic.

Off- and On-Leash Dog Activity

The Rennie Park off-leash area has been closed (the decision is currently under appeal; the result is expected soon). This puts more pressure on High Park which is already over capacity and subject to frequent violations in on-leash areas. Increased violations have been noted in the north marsh area of Grenadier Pond in recent months. This is a refuge for waterfowl, especially during winter months when the channel provides one of the only locations with open water.

Stewardship Activities

2013 was a busy year for the dedicated High Park Stewards: Three 'busting' sessions were held to remove invasive European and Glossy Buckthorn from 8000 square metres. Other sessions were held to remove Garlic Mustard, White Sweetclover, Hedge Parsley, and Asian Bittersweet. There were three spring and fall plantings of oak savannah native plants (2575 individual wildflowers, grasses and shrubs planted in two designated restoration sites of the tablelands). The work in previous years paid off as it was evident that native plant populations were establishing themselves.

Winter presentations are focusing on developing the next generation of stewards. See our [website](#) for more details.